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C O N F I D E N T I A L VILNIUS 000629

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TAGS: [NATO](#) [KCFE](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [ZB](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: U.S.-BAL TIC A/CFE MEETING IN VILNIUS, AUGUST 30

REF: A) STATE 116194 B) STATE 109669 C) USNATO 445

Classified By: CDA DAMIAN LEADER FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) Summary: U.S. HLTF Representative Deputy Assistant Secretary Karin L. Look led CFE consultations with Estonia,

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Latvia, and Lithuania on August 29 and 30, 2007 in Vilnius, Lithuania. On 29 August with Lithuanian MFA Under Secretary Pavilionis and on 30 August with all three Baltic delegations, the U.S. delegation explained and argued for the U.S. parallel action plan (ref A), sought Baltic support for it and, in particular, emphasized the special role of the Baltic States in it. While all three Baltic delegations praised the initiative and U.S. leadership in trying to achieve the key Alliance goals of Russia,s fulfillment of its Istanbul commitments and entry into force of the Adapted CFE Treaty (A/CFE), their skepticism regarding Russia,s intentions (and thus the U.S. plan,s viability) was considerable and to a large extent, unwavering. DAS Look made clear that that while the U.S. too is clear-eyed about Russia,s intentions and willingness to work seriously on fulfilling its remaining commitments, we also do not believe that simply maintaining the status quo is an option that would achieve consensus within the Alliance. Putin,s threat to suspend CFE coupled with related Russian assertions regarding A/CFE has created a new situation. We need a way ahead on Istanbul and ratification of A/CFE; and we need to address who will be limited by A/CFE and how.

12. (C) The Baltic States, core concern about the U.S. parallel action plan was its proposal for early consultations by the Baltic States and Slovenia with,inter alia, Russia on accession to Adapted CFE. The U.S. explained that this question appeared to be a core Russian concern despite public statements that each of the Baltic States hoped to join the Adapted CFE Treaty as soon as possible. At the outset the Lithuanian delegation simply opposed this idea; by the end of the second day they appeared to accept the importance of Alliance unity with regard to the plan and thus were warming to early consultations with CFE parties as proposed in that plan. Their less hostile attitude was due, in large part to a helpful Estonian message that underscored the need to get the conditions right for such consultations. The U.S. argument for the parallel action plan, including our proposal for consultations, which gained the most traction was the need for Alliance unity. DAS Look and EUR/RPM Dep Dir Jennifer Laurendeau observed that Russia,s focus on the Baltic States being part of CFE made it imperative that all three States play an early and visible role in the parallel action plan.

13. (C) Estonian Head of Delegation Margus Kolga clearly understood that the Baltic States will need to play an active role; the Lithuanian delegation remained skeptical and Latvian Head of Delegation Kaspars Ozolins was unconvinced. That said, all three argued that there must be consultations within NATO before engaging Russia. NATO Allies would need vocally to support Baltic statements and positions in broader consultations. The Latvian delegation submitted a non-paper which called for a NATO Contingency Operations Plan (COP) as a prerequisite for launching talks on Latvia's accession to A/CFE (NOTE: Text included in para 21. END NOTE) All three delegations requested that the U.S. provide a readout of the 11 September U.S.-Russia Paris bilateral meeting. It was agreed that the U.S. would seek to do so both on the margins of the 12 September V-10 in Tallinn with EUR PDAS Volker and on the margins of the 13 September HLTF meeting in Brussels with VCI DAS Look. End summary.

Viability of Parallel Action Plan: the Trouble with Russia

14. (C) Discussions at the 29 August meeting, chaired for Lithuania by MFA U/S Pavilionis, and at the 30 August meeting amongst all four delegations, were frank and substantive, centering on the U.S.- proposed parallel action plan for ending the current stalemate with Russia, and the key role of the Baltic States in that plan. Although all expressed much support for U.S. leadership and initiative, they also laid out a number of concerns with the viability of the U.S. plan largely due to Russian inflexibility.

15. (C) The Lithuanian delegation used the 29 August bilateral meeting for U/S Pavilionis to express his concern that Russia would use any NATO flexibility on Adapted CFE ratification for further wedge-driving within the Alliance, and produce an escalation of Russian demands, but no action on Istanbul. He argued that Russia should fulfill the Istanbul commitments as a prerequisite for the Baltic States to move beyond public statements to set up consultations and called for a firm multilateral Allied approach in a broader context (leveraging energy security, trade, and other instruments) to "force" Russia into action. Pavilionis emphasized the familiar Baltic concern about the possibility of any discussions about the Baltics without the Baltics present. He said he trusted the U.S. but doubted that the U.S. could control the process proposed in the parallel action plan (namely with regard to Germany and to some extent France) which could result in a fractured Alliance.

16. (C) The importance of the CFE Treaty to European security was echoed by each of the delegations during the 30 August discussions, as were concerns with maintaining Allied unity and skepticism about Russia's intentions. Latvian Head of Delegation Kaspars Ozolins, Director of the Security Policy Department of the MFA, praised the U.S. idea of a parallel action plan as a method to show Russia a way forward that helps Moldova and Georgia, while noting the hope that the Baltics would also benefit from the process. Ozolins cautioned that Russia would string the process along by partially fulfilling the requirements of the timeline and prolonging negotiations to squeeze further proposals from the Allies which would then be taken as promises. Estonian Head of Delegation Margus Kolga, Director General of the First Political Division of the MFA, expressed skepticism about Russia's readiness to move forward on Istanbul and their commitment to CFE. Russian behavior and statements could not all be explained by upcoming presidential elections, and there was a risk that U.S. proposed flexibility might be premature. Lithuanian Head of Delegation (on 30 August), Algis Dabkus, Director of the Security Policy Division of the MFA, underscored that NATO unity was a key element of the process but reiterated Lithuanian concerns with Russian intentions and where discussions may lead.

Status Quo Not an Option

¶17. (C) DAS Look made clear that that while the U.S. too is clear-eyed about Russia,s intentions and willingness to work seriously on fulfilling its remaining commitments, we also do not believe that the status quo -- simply maintaining the NATO position that Allies will not ratify the Adapted CFE Treaty until Russia,s remaining Istanbul commitments are fulfilled -- is a viable option. Laurendeau noted that at the moment, if no new ideas or steps were agreed, there appeared to be little prospect for progress on Istanbul and thus, every reason to believe that in the absence of movement by Allies on ratification of Adapted CFE, Russia would suspend implementation of the current CFE Treaty in December.

If we made no attempt to break the stalemate, Look explained, that could lead to the possibility of no Istanbul commitments fulfilled, no A/CFE on the horizon and the current CFE Treaty on life-support come December.

¶18. (C) DAS Look and Laurendeau made the case for why the Balts should consider consultations on accession to CFE as a way to assist in making this best effort with Russia to get the Istanbul commitments fulfilled and CFE preserved. The reasoning behind the parallel action plan was only partly directed at Russia: the U.S. believes that a forthcoming NATO message on CFE is also the best way to maintain, and sustain, a unified NATO position. This position will need to hold even if Russia does not agree to work with us and ultimately the CFE Treaty is placed at risk. In the event our effort fails, all Allies need to believe that it was Russia that refused to accept a fair, reasonable and pragmatic offer if we are to maintain Alliance unity.

¶19. (C) Dabkus (Lithuania) asked if the USG was sure it would be able to control the process of the action plan, noting specifically the German plans to hold a conference on CFE 1-2 October. DAS Look explained that we have informed Germany that the timing for this conference is not good and could be counterproductive. As Germany remains insistent on holding it, she said, we will attend and try to steer the process. She continued that this serves as a case in point as to why it was necessary for the U.S. to seize the initiative in developing a substantive plan before other Allies created plans that could potentially undermine Russian fulfillment of its remaining Istanbul commitments. (NOTE: The Lithuanian delegation seemed to be under the impression that it was only Germany that is dissatisfied with the status quo and willing to devalue the Istanbul commitments for traction on a new way forward. END NOTE) All delegations agreed that it would be important to try to define a constructive focus for the German conference, perhaps focused on the value Allies all place on CFE and the desirability of maintaining the regime.

Role of the Baltic States vis-a-vis the parallel action plan
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¶10. (C) All three Baltic States are prepared to continue to state publicly their willingness to accede to A/CFE once it,s in force, although Lithuania questioned the utility of these statements when they have already done so many times before. All were not comfortable with the U.S. proposal for consultations with Russia (and others) on accession to A/CFE. They were particularly wary of making clear publicly the conditions of their accession prior to entry into force of A/CFE.

¶11. (C) Ozolins (Latvia) observed that adding another promise (Baltic consultations) to the mix would not entice Russia to fulfill its Istanbul commitments. Russia could use consultations to try to split the Alliance by making specific proposals for ceilings that are acceptable to some Allies and not others. Linking Baltic consultations to Russia rescinding its announcement of suspension could result in Russia making Baltic consultations on A/CFE a precondition for Russia to move on Istanbul commitments.

¶12. (C) Kolga expressed Estonia's willingness to accede to A/CFE when the time comes and willingness to make public

statements about Estonia's intentions. He said that it might be premature to even discuss consultations with Russia and rushing into consultations might back the Baltic countries into a corner. Equipment ceilings and other details could only be set through a collective defense strategy; and therefore, consultations within the NATO context to determine what the Alliance can support must happen before any consultations with Russia. Dabkus (Lithuania) echoed concerns about such early consultations noting support for the Estonian proposal to start discussions within NATO. He questioned the proposed formats for broader consultations since the Joint Consultative Group is a forum where the Balts are not States Parties and the NATO Russia Council is a forum where Russia is at the table.

¶13. (C) Look and Laurendeau said that Russia's focus on the Baltic States being part of CFE made it imperative that all three States play an early and visible role in the parallel action plan. Look underscored that the Baltic States have an essential role as partners in this pragmatic plan; their role directly impacts the ability of the U.S. to lead the process and maintain a unified approach. Look and Laurendeau explained that consultations on accession are not the same as formal accession negotiations, and perhaps there could be a parallel process of intra-Alliance and NATO-Russia consultations. Look emphasized that the consultations envisioned could begin with sharing principles related to accession to Adapted CFE, rather than specifics (e.g. numbers). The effect would be to give the Baltic States a seat at the table as a key player in the Alliance on CFE. This would involve taking an active role as a member of the Alliance in saving the CFE Treaty, rather than refusing to be part of the process. The importance of Alliance unity to retaining a working CFE Treaty, getting Russia to fulfill its Istanbul commitments and having an orderly plan for ratifying A/CFE was the line of argument that gained the most traction throughout the discussions.

Baltic Proposal(s) - - - - -

¶14. (C) By the end of the day, discussions the three were no longer adamant in refusing to consider the possibility of consultations with Russia on accession, but they had not agreed to the idea, either. All three Baltic delegations emphasized that consultations within NATO must occur before broader consultations involving Russia; it would be imperative that all NATO States support Baltic statements and positions in broader consultations. In the right circumstances, if questions regarding the Alliance dimension, and an appropriate venue could be worked out, Estonia, and Latvia to some degree, appeared willing to consider the possibility of broader preliminary consultations which would key off of principles underpinning their previous statements about their willingness to join CFE. The Latvian rep worried, nonetheless, that Russia might use statements of general principles against the Balts to demonstrate their "aggressiveness" or turn Baltic commitments into preconditions for Istanbul commitments.

¶15. (C) Ozolins (Latvia) presented a non-paper which called for a NATO Contingency Operations Plan (COP) as a prerequisite for launching talks on Latvia's accession to A/CFE. It reiterated Latvia's willingness to negotiate accession to A/CFE, but stated that acceding to A/CFE should not undermine Latvia's National Security. Full text appears in para 21. Latvia intends to distribute this paper to Allies after receiving input from the U.S. Estonia expressed support for the initiative to start contingency planning and Lithuania noted the paper was of interest.

¶16. (C) U.S. delegation member Lieutenant Colonel Olejasz, Joint Chiefs of Staff, remarked that the paper raised two key issues: individual national security requirements and collective alliance responsibilities. Each country needs to consider its individual security requirements while also assessing collective responsibilities and requirements. Each

member has responsibilities to the Alliance and the Alliance has responsibilities to each member. While making clear that he does not speak for NATO, LTC Olejasz said that NATO values the Baltic States as members of the Alliance and is showing strong support with the Air Policing mission. He said that the U.S. has strong relationships with each Baltic country and highlighted their efforts to be good partners noting their support for and participation in the U.S. led coalition in Iraq and NATO led efforts in Afghanistan. LTC Olejasz said that the military supported development of the U.S. parallel action plan which serves as a means for NATO to put forward a best effort that maintains emphasis on host nation consent and continued Alliance solidarity. Laurendeau pointed out that the Latvian non-paper seemed to indicate that the security benefits provided by the CFE Treaty regime were in Latvia's national interest, which reinforced the position that all members of the Alliance should not only want this Treaty, but bear responsibility for working together to maintain it.

Presentation on northern flank forces

17. (C) U.S. delegation member James Starkey provided an informal presentation on conventional armed forces in the Leningrad Military District and the Kaliningrad Oblast' of Russia, and in Belarus. He noted the there had not been any significant changes in the forces during the past year, and that Russia,s focus remains in the south. Overall, Russian forces have been gradually improving since the mid-1990,s because of increased capital investment in facilities, increased training, and in recent years, the conversion of selected units to contract service. In the Leningrad Military District, active forces include one air assault (formerly airborne) division, two separate motorized rifle brigades, and one naval infantry brigade, as well as inactive brigades. There are some indications that changes may be under way that will lead to a decreased capability to activate additional forces. In the Kaliningrad Oblast,, there is a small active force (two low-strength separate motorized rifle brigades and one naval infantry brigade), but large holdings of tanks, ACV,s and artillery pieces provide a latent capability to activate at least three additional brigades. Belarus has a small portion of its combat equipment in active units and the capability to create a larger force after a period of mobilization and training. Ozolins inquired whether the active level of training of the airborne division in Pskov was a specific trend or more general. Starkey indicated the high level of training was a reflection of increased resources but also noted that airborne units train more than most others as they are kept at high readiness and usually are the first units deployed in a crisis. Ozolins also asked about Belarusian and Russian cooperation on training and procurement. Starkey responded that their air defense systems are integrated, and there is some combined training, but that neither has been doing much procurement. Both countries were keeping a substantial portion of their forces at a lower level of combat readiness. Starkey estimated it would take more than a month for the less ready and inactive units to be brought to full strength and trained to be capable of offensive operations.

Further Consultations

18. (C) Estonian Head of Delegation Margus Kolga said he understood that the Baltic States will need to play an active role as the Alliance engages Russia on CFE. Kolga noted Alliance unity is key, just as one Alliance voice is key with regard to Baltic accession negotiations. This means it is now time to start consultations within the NATO context on Baltic accession to CFE. The Lithuanian delegation remained skeptical, with Dabkus affirming that Lithuania is ready to support unified alliance approach and to do its part, but underscoring they do not want to be held hostage. As team players, Lithuania is open to consultations in NATO, but in

no rush to hold consultations with Russia. Latvian Head of Delegation Kaspars Ozolins was unconvinced and remained particularly concerned with the Baltic role in the timeline. Latvia envisions internal consultations first which will in turn determine what can be done in a broader context. Latvians would like a Washington reaction to their non-paper as soon as possible.

¶19. (C) All three delegations requested that the U.S. provide a readout of the 11 September U.S.-Russia Paris bilateral meeting. Look agreed that the U.S. would follow up on the margins of the 12 September V-10 in Tallinn with EUR PDAS Volker and that she would debrief on the margins of the 13 September HLTF meeting in Brussels.

¶20. (SBU) Listing of delegation members:

-- Estonia: Margus Kolga, Head of Delegation, MFA; Arti Hilpus, Deputy Head of Delegation, MFA; Peeter Helme, Security Policy Department, MFA; Kristjan Prikk, MOD International Cooperation Department; Kai-Helin Kaldas, MOD International Cooperation Department; Villu Tamul, Arms Control Group of the Estonian General Staff.

-- Latvia: Kaspars Ozolins, Head of Delegation, MFA; Raimonds Oskalns, Deputy Head of Delegation, MFA; Diana Krieva, Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Division, MFA; Janis Garisons, MOD Crisis Management and Mobilisation Department; Sintija Visnevskaja, MOD Defense Policy and Planning Department; Liga Mikučevska, National Armed Forces Joint Headquarter Arms Control Department; Ieva Jirgensone, NATO Permanent Mission.

-- Lithuania: Algis Dabkus, Head of Delegation, MFA; Donatas Ziugzda, Deputy Head of Delegation, MFA; Andrius Krivas, NATO Division, MFA; Jonas Daniliauskas, Non-proliferation and Disarmament Division, MFA; Dovydas Spokauskas, Arms Control, Non-proliferation and Disarmament Division, MFA; Martynas Lukosevicius, Arms Control, Non-proliferation and Disarmament Division, MFA; Robertas Sapronas, MOD International Relations and Operations Department; Liutauras Kavoliunas, Major of the Armed Forces.

-- United States: DAS Karin L. Look, Head of Delegation; Jennifer Laurendeau, Deputy Head of Delegation; Kathryn Ducceschi, Military Advisor to Department of State; Jeff Gibbs, Legal Advisor to Department of State; Hugh Neighbour, Chief Arms Control Delegate, U.S. Mission to the OSCE; Steve Olejasz, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Peter Perenyi, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Europe-NATO; James Starkey, CFE Expert for Department of State; Joe King, Defense Attache to Lithuania; Lauren Charwat, Regional Affairs Officer; Michael Dickerson, Political Officer.

¶21. (C) BEGIN TEXT OF LATVIAN NON-PAPER:

LATVIA CONFIDENTIAL RELEASABLE TO ESTONIA, LITHUANIA, US

Latvia's reflection on prospective negotiations on accession to Adapted CFE Treaty

Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) is an important mechanism for European security. It is a cornerstone of conventional arms control and confidence building in Europe. Hence efforts should be made to maintain and observe the CFE regime. Keeping the CFE Treaty in force, however, should be prime responsibility of States Parties to the Treaty. Burden of maintaining the CFE regime can not be shifted to non-member states.

Latvia notes that on a number of occasions it has expressed its readiness to negotiate potential accession to the Treaty as soon as Istanbul commitments are fully implemented and other corresponding provisions are in force. Simultaneously, Latvia shall give due consideration to the terms and conditions under which it may proceed to negotiations on the accession to the Treaty.

Acceding to the CFE regime should not undermine Latvia,s national security.

Based on the principle of collective security and defense, Latvia expects support from its Allies in case of military crisis. CFE Treaty on the other hand sets restrictions on armed forces and military equipment to be deployed on the territory of Latvia thereby directly affecting Latvia,s national security. In addition, changes to the immediate vicinity of Latvia,s borders constitute its security concerns. Thus, the terms under which Latvia accedes to the Treaty must take into account the potential deployment of Alliance,s forces on our territory that are adequate to the security needs of Latvia.

Since accession to NATO, the Baltic States have requested Contingency Operations Plan (COP). Latvia sees as one of the prerequisites for launching talks on Latvia,s accession to the CFE Treaty the elaboration of NATO COP. Eventually the NATO COP will form a basis for estimating the "territorial ceilings" for Latvia under CFE Treaty.

Furthermore taking into account latest changes in the security environment ni Latvia,s neighborhood, Latvia would see a need for closer cooperation in the field of capability development of Latvian Armed Forces that require additional financial means.

LATVIA CONFIDENTIAL RELEASABLE TO ESTONIA, LITHUANIA, US

END TEXT OF LATVIAN NON-PAPER.

122. (U) DAS Look has cleared this cable.
LEADER